

California State Journal of Medicine.

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Medical Society of the State of California

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JUNE, 1903.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

We presume the committee which advised, in its report, that editorials in the JOURNAL should refer only to scientific subjects gave this advice after proper consideration, and we hope that the Society adopted it in the same way. But for the Publication Committee the restriction looms up as a sort of specter in the way to bar passage. Who has the time, in this busy life, to work out papers on the historical and statistical sides of scientific subjects, the sides usually considered in editorial columns, unless there be a special task set and a remuneration offered? And even if the Publication Committee could or would present to the Society a series of such papers, who would read them, and what good could they do the Society? Would they win us one good member? The Committee believes that it will have to construe the term "scientific" in a somewhat liberal way, for there are many subjects, germane to the government and improvement of the Society, which the Committee finds readily at hand, and which it wishes to lay before the society for consideration by its members. There are not many easily managed purely scientific subjects, and there is no time for the management of the hard ones.

It must not be inferred that the Committee believes it has a mission, or is about to set on foot any special scheme; it has neither mission nor scheme; but it is very much in earnest about the successful management of the JOURNAL. It intends that a journal published by the Society shall be for the Society, and that it shall be quite alive all the time. It cannot do this if it is only permitted, or if it only permits itself, to refer editorially to purely scientific subjects. It must deal with subjects which it will classify under the heading of social science or Society science—that is, the science of upbuilding this Society in all possible ways, so that it can be of use and do

good in every conceivable manner. The Committee does not believe that the members will object to this interpretation of the instructions of the Society, but it asks that if the Committee's course is objectionable, those who object will state their grounds for objection, and it promises these its careful consideration. The Committee is aware that it was appointed to serve the Society, not to control it.

The State Society, by a vote of twenty-six to four, has recorded its approval of the present medical licensing law, and its disapproval of any attempt to modify it by placing the control of the Board of Examiners.

ers in any hands other than those of the medical profession. The attack upon the law was but poorly masked under the guise of an attack upon an individual member of the Board, and its failure is not regarded as the failure to defeat an objectionable individual, but as the last move of a most carefully laid plan to tear down somewhat from the protective wall placed about the public by the passage of the last medical practice act. Very few people were at any time deceived.

The necessity of medical supervision of the milk supply of cities as urged in the paper read by Dr. George H. Evans at the recent meeting of the State Society at Santa Barbara, and which will appear in full in the next issue of the JOURNAL, receives special and urgent emphasis at the present time, because of the appalling ravages of typhoid fever in the epidemic of that disease at Palo Alto. Such conditions will arise from time to time unless the medical profession awakens to the fact that it has a duty to perform, yet unfulfilled, to the public; a duty so imperative, that, unless undertaken and carried out, it will not be able to free its skirts of the charge of being accessory to criminal negligence. As a result of personal investigation the writer of this paper accumulated evidence to show that such epidemics are possible and probable at any time in this city. Bacterial counts of specimens of milk collected by him showed an average of over 223,000 germs to the cubic centimeter. An inspection of some of these dairies made an explanation of this pollution only too clear. No attempt is made to clean cows or milkers. The stables visited were, with one exception, foul, dark and ill-smelling. No medical inspection of the workmen on the farms was observed. The water supply in some instances was unprotected from the drainage of barns, houses and privies. Imagine the possible result in the event of a single case of typhoid fever occurring on such a farm, and remember that there is no inspection of the health of these workmen; that

mild cases of typhoid can easily exist unrecognized, until the polluted milk has carried its deadly errand into our homes, and has rendered desolate our hearts—not because the dairyman has been a criminal, but because the medical profession has committed a sin of omission! The county medical societies have a duty to perform. Will they still remain inactive in the face of these preventable epidemics?

The tragedy of Cornell, due to a polluted water supply, followed so closely by a similar, though fortunately less deadly epidemic of typhoid fever at Stanford University, should attract immediate and careful study at the hands of students of preventive medicine. For long it has been known that where many men from all sections are gathered together—as in military camps—typhoid fever and other diseases are to be carefully looked for and guarded against, yet that similar precautions should be taken in connection with large gatherings at university centers, does not seem to have been recognized. Where so many lives are placed in danger it would seem as though no amount of care or expense should be too much to ask, that the health and the lives of these young men and women may be properly safeguarded.

The appointment of a Tuberculosis Committee by the State Medical Society at the Santa Barbara meeting was in keeping with the general scientific work of the session. This showed our State Society to be abreast with the times on this important subject. The tuberculosis question has always been of sufficient magnitude to demand the attention of medical societies; but never until recent times has its investigation seemed to promise any hope of relief. Today the world is astir. Public opinion is being educated to the fact that tuberculosis is a preventable and curable disease. Municipalities, states and nations are making the prevention of the spread of tuberculosis a matter of earnest consideration. That our State Medical Society did wisely in taking up this subject is patent from the fact that tuberculosis is very common in our midst. Not only have we a large proportion of native cases, but also a great army of imported cases who come here to receive the advantages of the far-famed climate which certain sections are reputed to possess. How to deal with tuberculosis in California is a subject in which every citizen of our State has a vital interest. It is the intention of this committee to investigate the subject as thoroughly as they can. They wish to obtain the number of cases of the disease in the State; to find out what proportion of these are native and what proportion im-

ported; what measures are being taken, either by private or by public initiative, to check its spread; also to find out whether or not the physicians are in favor of taking measures for checking the disease. We bespeak for the committee the earnest support of every physician of the State, that their report may be complete and valuable. This investigation entails a great deal of work upon the committee and their work can be very much facilitated by a prompt reply to the circular letter which they intend to send to the physicians of the State.

In at least one State the full value to the public and to the medical profession of thorough and careful organization is amply demonstrated. In Kentucky every medical office in the State is filled through the medium of the State and county medical societies. No appointment to a State, county or municipal board of health, vaccinator, insurance examiner, etc., is made without consultation with and reference to the organized medical societies, and no man can receive such an appointment unless he is enrolled in the county society of the county in which he lives. Improper or unjust legislation can no longer even be introduced, for the tremendous strength of organized effort would at once strangle it. It is said, on the highest authority, that there is not a single advertising quack nor illegal practitioner in the State—a result due wholly to the complete organization of the profession and the persistent and insistent demands of the organization. A physician legally licensed to practice medicine in the State of Kentucky can have no recognized professional standing unless he be a member of his county and *ipso facto* his State society. It is quite time that this condition prevailed in every State, and we of California should see to it that no further delay occurs in furthering our complete organization and securing full control of all things medical within our State.

The spirit pervading the American Medical Association at the New Orleans meeting in May, was distinctly and pronouncedly a harmonious and very profound desire for organization and reorganization of the whole profession of the country. No one could have sat through the heat and the toil of the House of Delegates at this 54th annual meeting without being greatly impressed with this one underlying fact. The desire to end old wars and refrain from touching old and nearly healed wounds, was everywhere manifest and was most convincingly shown in the reports from 44 State Societies, showing a tremendous increase in membership. And it is right that this should